

Cedar Primary School

Cedar Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 2JP

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good enough. Teachers do not always adapt work when it is clear that pupils are ready for harder or different work.
- Teachers do not ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are always given the right level of challenge.
- In some lessons, pupils are not fully involved and, therefore, their learning is not maximised.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations for the way pupils present their work.
- Achievement requires improvement, especially in writing and mathematics. The most able pupils do not always make enough progress because their work is too easy.
- Pupils have weak spelling and handwriting and find it difficult to use reasoning in mathematics.
- Opportunities are missed for pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding by applying what they have learned about literacy and numeracy when working in other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership and management are good because there is a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school. Actions taken have been effective in driving the school forward.
- Leaders, managers and governors are having a good impact on improving teaching and pupils' achievement and the school is developing rapidly.
- Pupils are supported well in learning British values such as fairness and democracy and, consequently, they are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are enthusiastic about learning and are keen to help others.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and they are knowledgeable about staying safe. They are confident that they will be helped if they have a concern.
- Children settle quickly in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress from their starting points.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons, of which five were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the 106 responses to the online survey (Parent View). The team also held informal discussions with a number of parents.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed in the survey responses from 39 members of staff.
- A range of documentation supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents, checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Julie Sackett	Additional Inspector
Barbara Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cedar Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school. It has more than doubled in size in the last two years. It opened in September 2013, when Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools combined. This is the first inspection of the combined school.
- There is a part-time Nursery and three full-time Reception classes in the early years provision.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. These pupils are not evenly distributed across year groups.
- There have been many changes in staffing since the through primary school opened. The Headteacher joined the infant and junior schools as Executive Headteacher just prior to the amalgamation and a new senior leadership team was formed in September 2013.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The breakfast club is run and managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by:
 - ensuring teachers adapt work when it is clear that pupils are ready for harder or different work
 - consistently providing the right level of challenge for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - maximising learning by making sure that all pupils are fully involved throughout each lesson
 - having higher expectations for the way pupils present their work.
- Raise achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - always providing enough challenge, especially for the most able pupils
 - helping pupils to improve their spelling and handwriting
 - developing pupils' ability to use reasoning in mathematics
 - ensuring pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding by applying what they have learned in literacy and numeracy when learning in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have set a clear direction for school improvement and are unrelenting in their drive to bring about any necessary changes. While some actions taken have not been universally popular with members of staff, leaders have established a culture where good teaching and behaviour can thrive. The amalgamation of the infant and junior schools has been managed successfully, despite a high turnover of staff in the last two years.
- The monitoring of teaching is rigorous and senior leaders are good role models in their own teaching. As a result, they are well equipped to support and challenge other members of staff. Teaching is improving rapidly and inadequate teaching has been successfully tackled.
- Middle leaders have received good training and are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what works well at the school and what remains to be done to move the school to good.
- The additional funding to help support disadvantaged pupils is being used well this year. As a result, these pupils are now making more rapid progress than other pupils and are benefiting from extra teaching individually and in small groups.
- The school fosters good relations and is successful in discouraging discrimination of any kind. Leaders are improving the way that equality of opportunity is being promoted. Teaching and learning are being monitored with greater rigour than in the past, so that remaining inequalities in provision have been identified and are being tackled robustly.
- The special funding to improve sport is being used effectively to provide additional resources, clubs and coaching. Consequently, pupils take part in a wider range of sporting activities than previously and are developing their skills and stamina. For example, in Year 3, pupils know that it is important to 'warm-up' and 'keep your eye on the ball' when undertaking strenuous physical activity.
- Leaders have overhauled the curriculum so that it increases the pupils' interest at the same time as covering the breadth of topics it should. Teachers are making better use of local resources to make learning more meaningful and engaging. There is a good range of additional activities, such as clubs and visits to help bring topics to life.
- British values are promoted strongly and each class has a display showing the topic being currently emphasised. For example, pupils have recently explored topics such as respecting the views of others and fairness. All pupils improved their awareness of democracy when they were involved in a mock general election to coincide with the real event.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for well. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They learn to respect the needs of others. For example, they sampled what it must be like to be homeless by building their own shelters. In assembly, pupils learned about the importance of signs and symbols in religions.
- The local authority provides effective support for this rapidly improving school. Senior leaders have been especially pleased with the focused help received over the last year, for example, in developing the early years provision.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. All staff are fully trained and checked for suitability for working in a school. Comprehensive records are kept showing how the school has dealt with accidents and risk assessments are carried out for all activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors are well informed and have a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing and how this compares with other schools nationally. They know how good teaching is and what is being done to ensure that teaching improves so that it is consistently good or better. Governors know how good teaching is being rewarded and are looking at further ways of retaining good teachers in this area where the recruitment and retention of staff is challenging. They are knowledgeable about the school's systems for training teachers and other staff and managing their performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good over time and has improved since the previous inspection. Most parents and pupils are positive about behaviour at the school. The new behaviour policy is understood by the pupils and they are fully aware of the difference between bullying and falling out with their friends. One pupil spoke for others by saying, 'the headteacher is strict in a good way'.
- Rates of attendance are improving and most pupils attend regularly. The school is monitoring attendance with rigour and good attendance is rewarded with eggs from the school's free range hens. The well-attended breakfast club has helped to improve attendance and punctuality.
- There are clear procedures to help a few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. These pupils are supported and managed well.
- Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes towards learning, especially when their work is suitably challenging. They listen well in lessons and work well with each other. For example, pupils worked together well, when devising their own plays. Occasionally, pupils become slightly restless when the work is not adjusted well enough to move their learning forward.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility around the school and especially enjoy helping to look after the rabbits and chickens in the school courtyard.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. There are clear procedures in place to keep pupils safe and secure and parents are positive about the improvements made to increase the pupils' safety.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and they know how to stay safe. For example, they are knowledgeable about the need to stay safe when using the internet and know whom to approach if they have any worries.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good. Teachers do not always adapt work to ensure that it is at the right pitch for the pupils in their class. This is particularly true for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most able.
- There are times when teachers do not make sure that all pupils are fully involved in an activity. When this happens, learning and achievement slow. In contrast, teaching in the early years is consistently challenging and promotes the children's good progress.
- The teaching of literacy, reading and mathematics is improving but is not always good enough. Lessons have a clear structure so that learning can develop. There are good examples of teachers expecting pupils to 'up level' their vocabulary, although teachers do not consistently expect enough of pupils in their spelling and handwriting. Opportunities are missed for teachers to encourage pupils to make full use of what they are learning in writing and mathematics to support their topic work and deepen their level of skills and understanding. At times, in mathematics, there is too much emphasis on completing a task to the detriment of the pupils' deeper understanding.
- There are good systems in place to support teachers in planning across each year group. Clear routines have been established to support learning, including in the early years. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and ask some probing questions to help pupils to think about their learning. For example, in history, pupils were expected to explain how they knew that information they had been given about Ancient Greece was factual.
- Teaching assistants have received recent training and are taking on more responsibility for the pupils' learning. They provide effective support when working with small groups of pupils and remind pupils about how to behave. For example, one teaching assistant reminded a pupil to 'think about the choices you are making'.
- Relationships between members of staff and the pupils are good and, as a result, pupils' behaviour is managed well overall. For example, in one class, the teacher's good sense of humour helped to capture the pupils' interest when learning to describe a scene about a ship in a storm.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently. Following a whole-school focus on marking, teachers are starting to provide helpful guidance so that pupils know how to improve. Pupils are becoming more involved in checking their own learning and many respond to questions the teachers have asked them in their work. Teachers are developing their marking so that it is always sharply focused on pupils' next steps.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Achievement requires improvement because progress is uneven between classes and is not consistently good enough. Achievement is consistently good in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 was below average in 2014, in reading, writing and mathematics. While pupils' progress is improving rapidly and attainment is rising, pupils are catching up from past underachievement and consequently attainment remains below average in the current Year 6.
- Pupils across the school do best in reading. Arrangements for teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) have been strengthened this year. As a result, pupils in Year 1 are making rapid progress and are on track to do better in the phonics screening check than previously.
- In writing, pupils have weak spelling and their handwriting is poorly formed, making it more difficult for them to write quickly and at length.
- There has been a whole-school focus on developing mathematics this year and the subject has a higher profile than in the past. Pupils are improving their number skills well, but are weak at using their reasoning. For example, some pupils found it hard to explain how they had carried out their mental calculations.
- The progress of the most able pupils requires improvement because they are not consistently working on tasks that deepen their knowledge and understanding. In addition, opportunities are missed for them to extend their literacy and numeracy skills when working in other subjects so that they do not have the chance to demonstrate they have mastered these skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not always make enough progress. At times they are given work that is either too hard or not hard enough. When this happens, their progress is limited. Nevertheless, individual needs are being identified more thoroughly than in the past and additional focused activities are helping pupils to move learning forward more quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils were a very long way behind other pupils in 2014 and their progress was not good enough. They were a year behind other pupils at the school in mathematics and two terms behind in reading and writing. When compared with other pupils nationally, they were two years behind in mathematics and about a year behind in reading and writing. This year, the gaps in their attainment have reduced significantly. These pupils are now making more rapid progress than others at the school and are catching up with their peers.

The early years provision**is good**

- Most children are working below the levels typical for their age when they join the school in the early years, particularly in speech and language. They make good progress across the areas of learning and most reach the typical levels for their age by the end of the Reception year. Children achieve well and are prepared well for Year 1 and the next stage of their education.
- Teaching is consistently good. The good relationships and positive discussions between staff and children ensure that children develop their vocabularies well. For example, when building walls from bricks and cement, children in the Nursery were encouraged to use vocabulary such as taller and shorter.
- This year, there has been a greater focus on teaching children about phonics and children are further ahead than they were at this time last year.
- Members of staff have high expectations for the children's behaviour and use praise well. As a result, children are confident and happy when working with an adult or independently.
- Children behave well and feel safe and secure at school. Arrangements for keeping the children safe have a high priority and all staff are fully trained in caring for children of this age. Children move from one lesson to another, sensibly. For example, there was no fuss as children in the Reception year moved into their groups for phonics.
- Children concentrate well on the activities provided and enjoy learning, including during 'discovery time'. For example, in the Reception classes, children persevered when making their models of butterflies and bees and enjoyed experimenting with them by trying to make them fly.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders are knowledgeable about the needs of young children and ensure that provision continues to develop. Activities are well planned to cover all areas of learning and the use of the outdoor area has been extended since the previous inspection. Parents are involved in checking up on how well their children are doing and are positive about early years provision.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118457
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	447795

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Wadhams
Headteacher	Jacquie Keelan
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 October 2012 (Infant school only)
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